

THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE GENUS *LEPTURA* L.  
(COL.: CERAMBYCIDAE) IN GREAT BRITAIN

By RAYMOND R. UHTHOFF-KAUFMANN\*

## Introduction

Over a century ago Canon W. W. Fowler (1883) wrote an article including references to the British Longicornia; this was followed by a short series of papers on the same subject some 15 years later, which appeared in this periodical (Donisthorpe, 1898); thereafter another half-century was to elapse before the appearance of a collated paper on the Longicorn Coleoptera *in toto* (Kaufmann, 1948), published a few years prior to the late Evelyn Duffy's 1952 Handbook on the Cerambycidae. This present paper, therefore, reviews the current ecological distribution of one of those small but handsome and elegant genera of our native Coleoptera.

The genus *Leptura* L., sometimes included with *Strangalia* Serv. (Joy, 1932) or in part split into other groupings by the taxonomists, has always excited the interest of the very earliest of our entomologists: the occurrence of our half-dozen native species (with the addition and deletion of two still controversial items) has been noted in almost every British catalogue since the appearance of the very fullsome and informative systematic list published by Stephens in 1829.

It is to be said, nevertheless, that such was the enthusiasm and avidity shewn by many of the early- and mid- 19th century Coleopterists that a number of Cerambycids, quite common then, inevitably were over-collected to near extinction and rapidly disappeared from their haunts; this happened almost certainly, to mention but one of many examples, in the case of *Obrium cantharinum* L.

Despite all that, and the inevitable depredations of later years, but more particularly, the wholesale spraying of herbicides and the increasingly heavy pollution of the atmosphere since the war, the Longicorns, because they are largely xylophagous, seem to have survived surprisingly well.

In the latest British catalogue (Kloet and Hincks, 1977) the *Leptura* species, *inter alia*, are listed in alphabetical order; this may be a matter of convenience, but as it does not correspond with the more usually acceptable keys, the species referred to here are assigned to their customary systematic arrangement (Freude, 1966).

To conserve space, county and vice-county symbols follow Balfour-Browne's 1931 paper: italicised letters indicate that it is

\*13 Old Road, Old Harlow, Essex, CM17 0HB.

from there that the insect has been widely taken; bracketed letters imply doubtful or uncertain records; a dagger (†) means a specimen imported from elsewhere in the country or a fortuitous example.

### LEPTURA *sensu stricto*

#### *L. (Anoplodera* Muls.) *sexguttata* F.

A species still largely restricted to a few counties in the south of the country. There are some scanty more northerly records, where it has been but rarely found, and others from the Principality and Ireland.

ENGLAND: EY, LN, ND, NY, *SH*, SR, SW, WK. WALES: MN. IRELAND: NK.

Described as a 'relict species of old forest areas' (Skidmore, 1969), the Welsh specimen was swept from under an oak some 20 years ago. This is a very local beetle, occasionally quite common in a propitious summer. It is usually taken by sweeping grasses and flowers, including brambles, ground elder, kingcups and *Viburnum*, and by beating trees and shrubs in blossom such as dog rose, hawthorn and holly. It has also been captured off pine needles. Emergence months are May to July; there is a solitary January record. It is still to be found in that most popular of areas, the New Forest, where it has been seen as recently as 1985. The larvae feed on oak and beech.

A great number of aberrations, based upon the pattern of the elytral maculations, are described from the Continent among which the entirely melanic form is regarded as extremely rare (Freude, 1966), but the only British kind first catalogued (Marsham, 1802; Stephens, 1829) is the ab. *exclamationis* F., found with the type in SR and SW.

#### *L. livida* F.

This is the smallest species of the genus and by far the commonest, although for the most part confined to the south, the West Country and the Midlands. A local beetle, sometimes abundant on vegetation in the sheltered parts of the cliffs in southern and western regions. It occurs by sweeping grasses, *Achillea*, brambles, chamomile, *Chrysanthemum leucanthemum*, hedge mustard, *Heracleum* (where it is difficult to spot as it hides under the florets with only its head and antennae protruding), *Lepidium*, *Matricaria*, *Solidago* etc. Further inland it may be beaten off hawthorn blossom and horse chestnut. It was once recorded from Houghton Woods, Lancs. about 150 years ago. The only other northern record is a vague one from the Border country. May to August.

ENGLAND: *BD*, *BK*, *BX*, *CB*, *DT*, *EK*, *EN*, *ES*, *EX*, *GE*, *GW*, (*HF*), *HT*, *HU*, *IW*, *L*, *LN*, *LR*, *MM*, *MX*, *ND*, *NE*, *NM*, *NS*,

OX, SD, SE, SH, SL, SR, ST, SW, WC, WK, WO, WS, WX.  
WALES: GM. SCOTLAND: (BW). IRELAND: RO.

The larvae are found in oak and other (unspecified) deciduous trees (Freude, 1966) and in conifers (Lyneborg, 1977) — which seems unusual but possible as the adult had been found infrequently on firs.

*L. sanguinolenta* L.

With a distribution focused upon two centres in Great Britain — Scotland and East Anglia — but there are a few southern and western records. It is remarkable that this species has been found in two regions of so different a nature and so widely separated; the modern Coleopterist, anxious to add this rare insect to his list of captures, is nowadays advised to travel to the far north of Scotland, where it may be found in highly localized parts. This small, rather vividly coloured beetle occurs from June until September in afforested areas on pines and sometimes rowan trees. It settles, too, on *Heracleum* growing in forest rides.

ENGLAND: EN, ES, HU, L (Stephens, 1831, 1839), NE, SD, SH, SR, WY†. SCOTLAND: EI, EL.

The larva attacks dead conifers, especially firs and spruce (Freude, 1966) and fire-charred pines (Duffy, 1953).

*L. rufa* Brullé†.

Its continued inclusion, even as a very dubious British species, in our latest catalogue (Kloet and Hincks, 1977) verges on the absurd. It rests entirely upon the finding of a single example 120 years ago. The beetle does not even occur in central Europe (Freude, 1966) being confined to the west of the Continent and at the other extreme, Greece and Turkey: even there it is a rarity.

'*L. rufa* has been comparatively recently introduced, and rests on one specimen, so that it requires further confirmation before it can be admitted to our lists' (Fowler, 1890). Fowler (*op. cit.*) adds that the example in question has never 'occurred before or since, and it might have been imported in timber'. '... decidedly, ... it was imported' (Donisthorpe, 1898).

This has not prevented its being listed as an indigene, thus, from Rye (1866) onwards the name recurs in several of the catalogues (Morris, 1865; Pascoe, 1882; Fowler and Matthews, 1883; Sharp, 1883; Bennett, *ca.* 1893; Newbery and Sharp, 1915). Very rare' (Cox, 1874) (!).

The history of *L. rufa* is quite simple; a single male was once taken by a Mr. Thorncroft at Holm Bush, Sussex in the summer of 1865. The only real question that remains is:— did Mr. Thorncroft find it in East or West Sussex? It so happens that in the gazetteer there are two localities in that county, each a seat; the one is near Cuckfield, East Sussex and the other near Horsham, West Sussex.

To confuse matters further there are also a Holmbush House, Steyning and a Holmbush Manor, Horsham, both located in West Sussex. Cuckfield and Horsham are only some 16 kilometres apart; perhaps Mr. Thorncroft found his beetle on the border separating the two vice-counties. Holmbush, Brighton (Fowler, 1905)! He might at least have been a little more explicit\* — a remark which could equally be directed at *L. rufa*'s highly questionable place in the 1977 catalogue.

*L. scutellata* F.

This is a species which is primarily associated with ancient forests; it is in consequence largely confined to the older trees in localities such as the New Forest, Windsor Forest, and what remains of the Epping and Hainault Forests. There is also an old reference from Sherwood, where it was rare. It is not known from either Wales or Scotland, but there is a record from Ireland.

ENGLAND: BK, HT, L. NM, SE, SH, WK. IRELAND: NG.

A local, occasionally quite common rather than scarce beetle, found on decaying beech, birch, hornbeam, oak, and most recently attacking sycamore (J. A. Owen). It can be found from March onwards until August. It has been taken as well off brambles, flowering hawthorn and *Oenanthe*. It is sometimes found crawling somewhat sluggishly on freshly-cut faggots and by stripping the bark off cut logs. Although the larva lives in the other trees named above, the favoured pabulum is the beech from which it has been more often than not recorded.

The sexes are quite distinct — apart from build — and are recognized by the scutellum of the male, which is densely covered with silver hairs; in the female, the pubescence is golden in colour (Freude, 1966), coloration which is rigidly distinct (Linssen, 1959) and without any gradation of shades.

*L. rubra* L.

It is most remarkable that a century was to pass before this insect was re-established as a native in Britain. There seems little doubt that the beetle indicated by Dr. W. Turton and named in a footnote (Stephens, 1829) as '*rubrotestacea* Illig., . . . ♂ *Le. testacea* Linn., . . . ♀ *Le. rubra* Linn.' refers to the differently coloured sexes of this species; and again (Stephens, 1831), '( . . . *mas., elytris pallide testaceis immaculatis: foem., thorace supra elytris que rubris immaculatis* . . . Said by Turton to be indigenous)!. 'Improperly indicated as British' (Stephens, 1839). These dismissive remarks evidently resulted in the omission of *Leptura rubra* from all the catalogues onwards until 50 years or so ago (Beare, 1930), when it was finally restored to the list following its re-discovery in 1918 (Thouless, 1919), when the latter found it in century-old pinewoods in Horsford.

\*The locality for *L. rufa* is now known to be Poynings, Sussex.

It had been feared that the large areas of Norfolk taken over by the Forces during the last war might have adversely affected the economy of this beautiful beetle (Kaufmann, 1948, p.75: fn. 1), but that was far from being the case; indeed, *L. rubra* has spread amazingly well in East Anglia and at times is common enough in a number of places to be picked off Umbellifers growing along the wayside of the roads and tracks on Forestry Commission lands now open to the public.

A localized, quite common beetle in the two eastern counties: this is contradicted (Harde, 1984), who states, '. . . extremely scarce in Britain'. It is also recorded from the Thames basin and Woolmer Forest, North Hants.

ENGLAND: BK, *EN*, NH, OX, WN, WS.

The males are usually found on flowers, *Heracleum* in particular, sometimes on bracken and hawthorn blossom. On hot sunny days – the end of July and beginning of August are the most favourable – they may be netted in flight. The females are less active. They are normally found sitting on rotten larch and firs (Duffy, 1953). May to September.

The larvae develop in the stumps, branches and roots of conifers (Freude, 1966), including spruce and pine (Lyneborg, 1977), who adds that it is destructive to fencing posts and untreated, wooden telegraph poles; the latter is confirmed (Harde, 1984) but discounted (Freude, 1966), who perhaps had metal posts in mind.

The sexes are easily separated: the males have a thorax black above and testaceous elytra; the females, which are larger, have pronotum and elytra bright, almost vermilion red.

#### *L. fulva* Deg.

With a scattered distribution but in the main a southern species. It is unknown in Scotland.

ENGLAND: BK, DY, EC, HF, IW, NH, SD, *SH*, SW. WALES: GM. IRELAND: NG.

A beetle which is largely associated with rotten timber, including old railway sleepers (many examples in collections have come from this source) and decaying posts. It may also be swept from grass, *Achillea*, *Angelica*, *Heracleum*, *Spiraea*, thistles and wild roses. It is a very local beetle, rarely common. The larvae are found in aspen and beech (Freude, 1966) and the imagines may be captured from May onwards until August.

#### *L. virens* L.

This is a very attractive-looking beetle with a greenish, almost velvety appearance, about which there seem to be some very con-

flicting views over its retention in the British lists: ' . . . very rare and doubtfully indigenous; recorded by Stephens from the Forest of Dean; and from Scotland; one or two other specimens are in our collections. Dr. Sharp does not include the species in his Scottish list, and it might perhaps with advantage be omitted or placed with the doubtful species' (Fowler, 1890). ' . . . Of this species . . . I can learn nothing reliable, and consider it more than doubtfully indigenous' (Donisthorpe, 1898). 'Very rare; specimens have been taken in Scotland, and I possess a pair from the forest of Dean' (Stephens, 1831). 'Decayed trees: Forest of Dean, June' (Stephens, 1839).

'Stephens's record for the Forest of Dean is corroborated by the existence of an example in good condition in the Dale collection at Oxford, labelled as from that locality, "from A. Ford's coll. 1896 (C. W. Dale) . . ." (Allen, 1968). The specimen is a male (Walker, 1932).

Mr. Allen opines that it 'should be restored to our list as extinct species', *loc. cit.*

Elsewhere (Allen, 1967) he expresses ' . . . a catalogue of the entire known fauna of a given region should . . . include (marked as extinct . . . ) species known . . . on reasonable evidence to have bred here up to some time in the previous century . . . it would seem premature to pronounce any species wholly extinct at all events in the Coleoptera. It is illogical as well as inconvenient to omit from our list species still extant as documented specimens in our collections, especially if supported by published records, . . . unless there are good grounds for . . . suspecting them of being mere importations. . . The fact that there are in the Coleoptera . . . possible cases too doubtful to qualify for admission is no reason for excluding the relatively few clear ones . . .'

The species is omitted from the second Kloet and Hincks catalogue, but it is named as British — 'Rare' (Cox, 1874) — and stands in many of the catalogues (Stephens, 1829; Curtis, 1837 *et al.*) until the second decade of this century (Newbery and Sharp, 1915); thereafter it was dropped.

A case has certainly been made for the inclusion of *L. virens* as once native but now extinct in the next edition of the British catalogue — which is more than can be said of *L. rufa* Brullé.

Enquiries up-to-date as to the whereabouts of the reputedly Scottish example of *L. virens* have so far proved negative.

ENGLAND: GW. SCOTLAND: (?); no further information.

In Europe — it is not regarded as British (Harde, 1984) — the imago is found on flowers in mountainous and sub-alpine regions, June to August; the larva feeds in conifers (Freude, 1966), including firs, spruce and pines (Picard, 1929).

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